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AUTHOR Hoppe, Margaret R.
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ABSTRACT

The establishment of open admissions policies at institutions of professional/graduate education in recent years has led to the creation of a heterogeneous student clientele, many of whom are deficient in the reading and study skills necessary for academic success. This paper considers the teaching of reading to professional/graduate students. It discusses issues and research findings related to the academic potential of students admitted to professional/graduate schools, the goals and major features of a professional/graduate school setting, and the reading processes that a mature reader must use to gain meaning from professional/technical materials. The paper then suggests a model for a reading/study skills program for professional/graduate school students. (GW)

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PROVIDING INSTRUCTION IN READING AND STUDY SKILLS TO PROFESSIONAL/GRADUATE STUDENTS

Paper presented at the Twenty-First Annual Meeting of the College Reading Association in Cincinnati, Ohio

BY: Margaret R. Hoppe

October 28, 1977

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PROVIDING INSTRUCTION IN READING AND STUDY SKILLS TO PROFESSIONAL/GRADUATE STUDENTS

In the next ten years one of the greatest challenges confronting many teachers of college reading, will be the creation of reading/study skills programs for professional or graduate school clientele. More often then not, this will require the application of existing theories of reading, studying, and learning to academic settings unique unto themselves. Settings like law, medicine, engineering, and business which, heretofore, were the sole domain of the professional academician.

What has spurred this challenge is a major change in the student population entering professional/graduate schools. Since the sixties, the demand for social reform and equality of opportunity for all has forced most public and private institutions of professional/graduate training to open their doors to a more heterogeneously talented population. Like the impact of World War II veterans on colleges, the new student clientele has experienced countless difficulties in adjusting to the academic demands of a professional/graduate milieu. In fact, one school alone reported that at least seventy percent of their minority and lower SES student populations have been on academic probation one or more times.[1] Confronted with problems of this nature, as well as, startling attrition, many schools instituted academic support service after support service; while others changed admission standards or procedures for selecting the minority or lower SES applicant.

Yet, after innumerable program changes many professional/graduate schools are still confronted with startling attrition rates amongst their new student clientele. It is because of this fact, that teachers of college reading are being called upon to provide a reading/study

skills program to a reader totally removed from the training and experience of the instructor. In other words, a reading program for a student that is housed in an educational milieu very different from an undergraduate setting who is studying the technical aspects of a discipline far removed from the professional training of a teacher of college reading.

As one accepts the challenge, he/she must proceed gingerly. Preconceptions of the teaching of reading based upon undergraduate settings may lead one to concentrate on trivial features of the learning process and overlook or underemphasize important ones.[2] For this reason, the teacher of reading must assess not only the reading process of the student, but also the reading demands of the educational process. In a sense, consideration must be given not just to the individual as an entity with reading strengths and weaknesses, but also to the individual as a student who must learn to succeed in a new educational arena. As Freidenberg states, success or failure at the professional/graduate school level is a relationship not a condition. To ascertain the proper relationship between learner abilities and educational demands, one must understand what the student brings to the setting; what will be expected of the student as a learner in this setting; and what will be the reading processes employed by a student in this learning milieu?

With this in mind, it is the purpose of this discussion to approach the teaching of reading to professional/graduate clientele in a three part analysis. First, consideration will be given to the overall issues surrounding the academic potential of most students admitted to professional/graduate schools. Second, consideration will be given to the general purpose and institutional features of a professional/graduate school setting. Third, consideration will be given to the actual reading processes that a mature reader must perform to gain meaning from professional technical

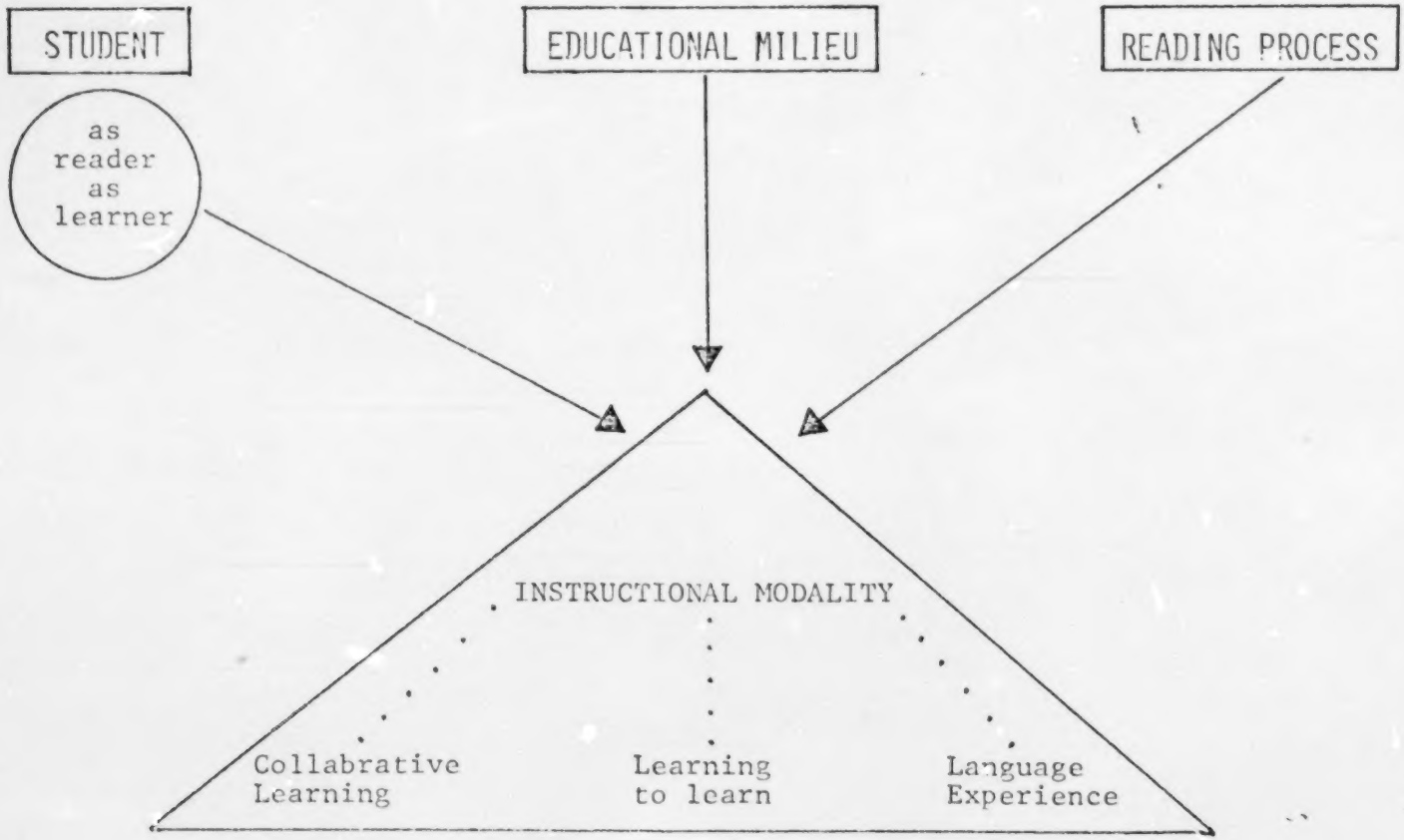
material. Through this three part analysis, one may glean understanding as to why a program for professional/graduate school students should embrace learning to learn, collabrative learning, and language experience instructional approaches. (See Diagram I)

ACADEMIC POTENTIAL OF THE PROFESSIONAL/GRADUATE SCHOOL STUDENT

Since the sixties when institutions of professional/graduate education began to make concerted efforts to admit minority and lower SES students, controversy ensued over the academic potential of the new clientele. Some professors argued that any student regardless of race, creed, or sex admitted under less stringent standards will not have the academic potential to succeed in a competitive educational milieu; such as, law, engineering, medicine, or business. Others hypothesized that it was not the student who lacked potential but that it was the institution which lacked receptivity to the needs of a new type of learner. Without providing an environment amenable to the needs of a heterogeneous population, they reasoned, most students admitted under special standards or from backgrounds unlike the 'typical student' at said institution would go in one door and out the other but never have their talents brought to fruition.

Yet, in the opinion of this author to believe that a student who has attained this level of schooling lacks potential, one must assume either that admissions screening devices at this educational level have the capacity of accurately identifying the talents necessary for academic success; or that admission procedures in some form or another can accurately predict whether a student will or will not be successful in said institution. However, research at varying institutions of legal education discloses that existing admission techniques as accurate predictors of future academic success are very very limited.

DIAGRAM I


STUDENT
as reader as learner
EDUCATIONAL MILIEU
READING PROCESS
INSTRUCTIONAL MODALITY
Collabrative Learning
Learning to learn
Language Experience

General Conclusions That can be drawn from the literature are:

1. There is a correlation between standardized test scores and future grade point average, but it is not statistically significant.[3]

2. Standardized test scores correlate highest with other standardized test scores (e.g., SAT and GRE), yet present norming procedures can not successfully eliminate all cultural and linguistic bias. Therefore, on standardized instruments of this type, the minority and lower SES student populations will always evince lower score distributions than their white middle class counterpart.[4]

3. For the minority and lower SES student, most institutions place more emphasis on a student's record of success in former educational settings than on standardized test scores.[5]

4. Regardless of the weighting procedure or prediction formula employed, most admissions procedure over predict or under predict the potential of a lower SES or minority student.[6]

5. There is no correlation between standardized test scores and success in the profession of law or medicine.[7]

6. Regardless of the statistical weighting technique employed, most admissions devices can not accurately predict the academic success of an individual because most devices only measure verbal fluency.[8]

7. To determine the given group of acceptable applicants for a particular school, most institutions analyze a combination of objective and subjective indicators of the learner's potential. The usual practice is to establish an acceptable range for each given variable.

8. Institutions which have special admit students usually accept their special group through comparable admissions categories but with different ranges.[9]

Therefore, given the overall nature and limitations of admission procedures, as indicators of future academic success, one may assume that college graduates who have demonstrated academic potential in former learning settings and who have met the minimum admission standards of a particular school should have the potential to succeed at said professional/graduate institution. In a sense because each institution's admission

standards are different, the crucial issue becomes not if the student has the ability but rather what his/her ability is in relation to the rest of the student body. Yes, the student's standard diviation in the school's population is crucial because a student with a 350 on the LSAT should not be expected to compete with student groups whose mean LSAT score is 600. He/she should be able to compete, however, with a group whose mean score is 450.

Thus, one may conclude that there exist academic differences between a student admitted through regular or special admission standards, but the degree or nature of differences is hard to ascertain. One, though, can assume general features indicative of both groups of students as based upon objective and subjective indicators. For the sake of brevity, five general assumptions regarding the nature of a professional/graduate student have been cited in Table I. Each assumption has been examined in light of the act of reading and in light of the teaching of reading. It is hoped that this outline serves to illuminate the major feature of a mature learner that must be considered in the design of a reading/study skills program.

TABLE I

ASSUMPTION	INDICATOR	RELATION TO READING	RELATION TO TEACHING READING
Most professional/graduate students are fluent mature readers	Standardized Test Scores (GRE, LSAT, etc.)	Test score indicates verbal facility in relation to the school populations. Students scoring around the school mean should be verbally fluent to compete. The score does not indicate a student's skill strengths or weakness, but does indicate fluency in reading standard English.	Given the student is a fluent reader in materials written in standard English, one must teach the student to transfer these skills to a new medium and aid the student in developing skills to process information more quickly and efficiently.
Most professional/graduate students have potential for mastering subject matter at certain institutions	Same as Above Undergraduate grades	Scores and records indicate potential; however, the student must master technical nomenclature at the same time he/she processes information. Any difficulty with the surface or deep structure will debalitate understanding.	To enhance reading facility, the student must master the nomenclature as well as the skills of the profession in processing the information. A language experience approach coupled with collabrative learning experiences will facilitate learning the language and skills. Both processes will expedite mastery of material and the professionalization process.
Most students are self motivated learners	Seeking professional training in and of itself is an indicator of self-motivation.	Desire to seek professional advancement may indicate a willingness and desire to analyze and read technical material.	Given the desire, the student needs direction in transferring or adapting learned skills and developing new skills to the academic demands of the material and the setting.

TABLE I (CONT.)

ASSUMPTION	INDICATOR	RELATION TO READING	RELATION TO TEACHING READING
The student must adjust his/her learning style to the new educational milieu	Common complaint of students is the amount of work demanded of them.	Desire and motivation to enhance reading/studying skills to optimum efficiency.	Learning to learn approach coupled with collabrative learning experiences should facilitate adjustment to the new academic demands.
Special admit and/or minority student may perceive elements of discrimination or prejudice	No research was uncovered which discloses overt forms of prejudice or discrimination; but the literature is replete with covert measures.	A learner who perceives prejudice in the setting may withdrawl from those elements which are most threatening. Withdrawl from the milieu hampers the learner from using the resources he/she needs for reading professional materials.[10]	All of the preceeding are indicated (learning to learn, collabrative learning, and language experience) in order to phase the student into the professional skills and familiarize the learner with the intent of the educational process.

PROFESSIONAL/GRADUATE EDUCATIONAL MILIEU

As Friedenberg states, all students admitted to a professional/graduate school have the potential to succeed.[11] Success or failure is not a condition; it is a relationship between the learner and the institution. In a sense, a student at this level of academia must adapt his/her learning style to a new educational milieu.

One of the greatest problems confronting the student is that this new educational milieu is very different from former school settings. This is so because the goal of professional/graduate schools to educate students in the knowledge, skills, techniques, and norms necessary for acceptance into the professional community. To achieve this goal, education becomes professionalization; that is, socialization of behavior and conveyance of knowledge.[12] Of course, all schools as institutions of a society socialize students; however, not in the manner of a professional school whose aim is to inculcate individuals into the ethical normative behaviors of a specialized group; such as lawyers. Thus, the professional/graduate student must be amenable to the socialization processes operative in the educational milieu.

Each aspect of the professional/graduate school setting is designed to foster professionalization: socialization and knowledge conveyance. Curriculum requirements, instructional processes, classroom student-teacher exchanges, et cetera are all designed to convey knowledge and skills and at the same time socialize behavior.[13] In law, for example, the socratic method of inquiry is employed in classroom discussions of law cases. Each case is analyzed in a logical rational manner from identifying the facts of the case, to the issues, and the court decision, to ascertaining the rationale behind the decision. A student is taught to analyze each case in a multitude of perspectives and to become facile

drawing conclusions as to why a case would receive a particular ruling. In a sense, students must learn to analyze all sides of an issue and draw conclusions based upon logical reasoning. They are not to determine issues or conclusions as to the way it should be, always will be, or ought to be because there are no definitive conclusions in law. Thus, through the formal instructional technique of socratic dialogue, students of law learn informally the way to logically analyze cases, issues, and rulings. In a sense, they learn the reading skills, techniques, and reasoning processes that will be later evaluated by the instructor through examinations. If a student perceives this instructional process as threatening, pointless, or poor teaching, rather than a modality necessary for educating the learner, the student may experience great difficulty in adjusting to the demands of the setting.

For this reason, some of the major features of a professional/graduate milieu have been listed in Table II. Along side each feature is a brief description of how this feature may impact postively or negatively on the act of reading and of learning. In this manner, one may see which aspects of the educational milieu are vital not only to professionalization but also to academic success.

As outlined in Table II, the student must be amenable to socialization as well as knowledge reception. He/she must be emeshed in the environment and employ most environmental features to expedite and enhance his/her academic success. As heretofore indicated, most students who are accepted into a professional/graduate school have the academic potential to succeed, the issue for the learner then becomes how to adjust his/her skills, abilities, and talents to the new setting. For this reason, the author of this paper has considered three instructional modalities: collabrative learning, learning to learn, and language experience for

TABLE II

THE GOAL OF PROFESSIONAL/ GRADUATE SCHOOLS: Convey knowledge and inculcate professional norms.	Each aspect of the institution is designed to accomplish this dual goal; namely, curriculum requirements, instruction, textbooks, classroom organization, examinations, academic services, et cetera. Thus, the learner must be amenable to a number of these features to internalize professionalization. Without mastering both knowledge and norms, the student probably will not achieve academic success.
ENVIRONMENT OF LEARNING MILIEU: More competitive than undergraduate settings.	Competition is an outgrowth of formal organizational structures but it is not an intended element. More often than not it breaks down communication vertically and horizontally - between students and between students and faculty.[15] Since communication is vital to group socialization and mastery of nomenclature and skills, the student must learn to overcome the negative aspects of competition in a learning milieu.
ROLE DEMANDS: Academically strenuous and personally demanding on time, family, and other roles.	Full time professional/graduate study demands that the individual place education as the top priority. This may be emotionally difficult for many students whose family demands are great. A student must learn to organize study time and learn to enhance efficiency of learning.
READING MATERIALS: Actual or simulated professional material.	More often than not for a novice the surface structure of the technical language will be unfamiliar to the reader and will hamper processing of the deeper structure. For this reason, a student must learn both the semantic and syntactic novelities of the professional nomenclature. This must be accomplished as quickly as possible because the student must process information in a developmental manner after all concepts build upon each other.

teaching reading to this type of learner. These three approaches can be further supported when one considers the actual reading processes this type of student must employ to master professional-technical material.

READING PROCESSES OF MATURE READER-PROFESSIONAL/GRADUATE STUDENT

According to Ausubel, each human being possesses a hierarchially organized internal cognitive structure of conceptual traces under which are subsumed or anchored less inclusive concepts.[16] Moreover, this conceptual structure is the "primary factor affecting meaningful verbal learning and retention"[17] because it affects the degree to which the learner can process language both at the surface and deep structure level.

It is important to remember that all languages have two levels: a surface structure which consists of the sounds and written symbols, and a deeper structure which is meaning. The surface and deep structures of a language are related to each other by a system of rules namely grammar-syntax. Goodman states that "without these rules we could never understand a sentence because the meaning of a sentence is governed not by the individual words, but by the manner in which they interact with each other".[18] Thus, in reading language one must know the symbols, the meanings behind the symbols, and the rules governing the sequential ordering of the symbols. Since there is usually an unlimited number of word combinations that a language may contain, most native speakers to a degree are illiterate because they will not be able to gain meaning from every combination of words. This is so because unless the reader is familiar with the surface and/or deep structure, he/she is unable to process information and gain meaning.

Illustrating this concept is Frank Smith's comparison of the linguistic processes of a beginning reader and a fluent reader. He discloses that the

beginning reader and the fluent reader process written material through three cue systems. The beginning reader starts with the grapho-phonic decoding of the language, then employs the syntactic structural aspects of the word sequences and finally evokes semantic input to derive meaning from language.[19] A fluent reader, on the other hand, "is able to identify meanings directly from the visual features without the mediation of word identification, provided he/she is able to make use of the syntactic and semantic redundancy that exists within sequences of words".[20] However, if a mature reader is unfamiliar with the grapho-phonic, syntactic, or semantic parts of a written form or is unable to subsume or anchor the information to his/her cognitive structure, the reader will exhibit patterns similar to the reader learning to read.

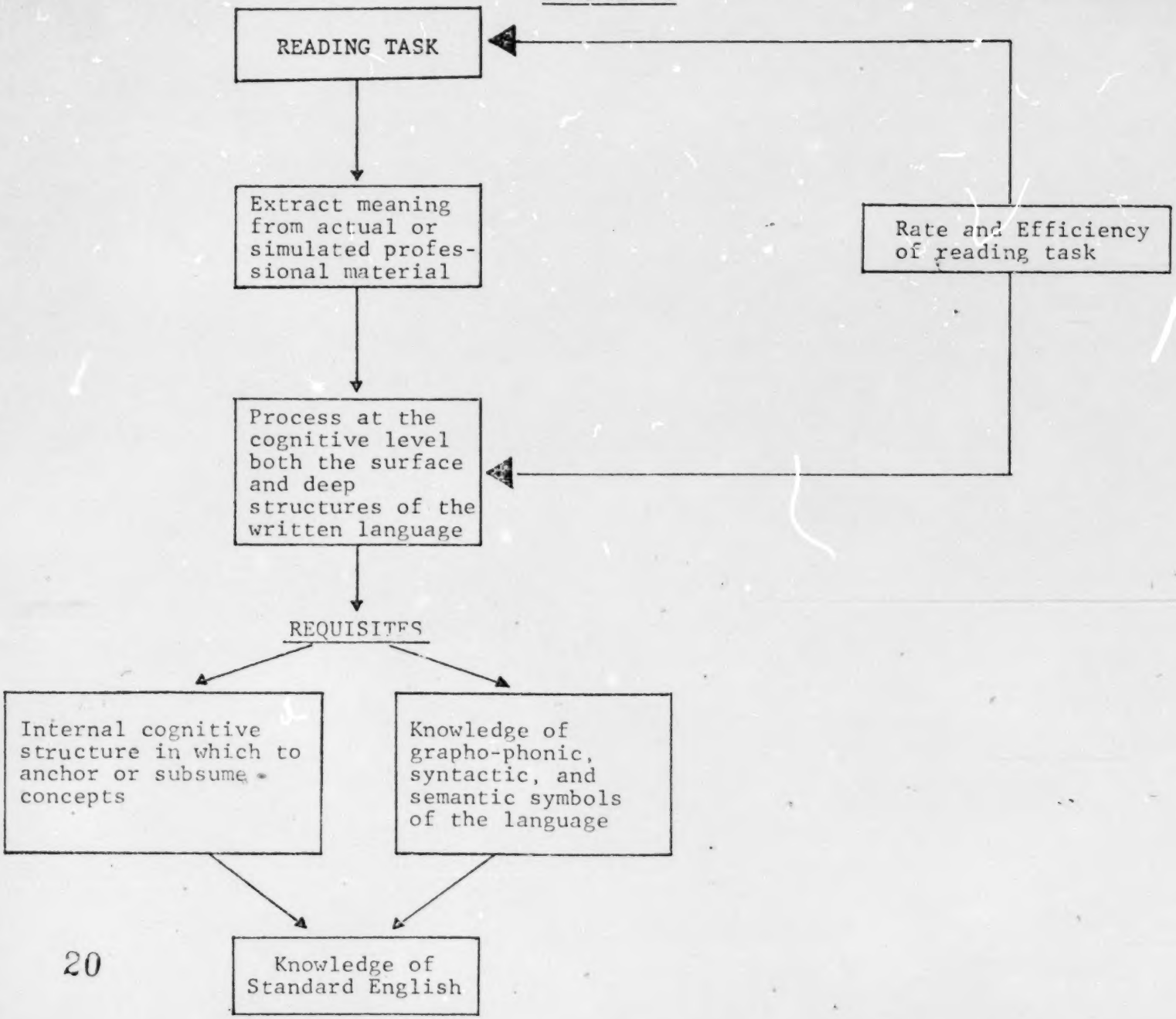
Like the beginning reader, reading will be very slow and arduous work. Words and sentences must be reread every time an unfamiliar word is encountered. In fact, if the reader encounters difficulty with every fourth or fifth word in a sequence, comprehension and rate will falter.[21] What occurrs is that every time a reader experiences difficulty in processing either the surface or deep structure of a language, he/she focuses more and more attention on the elements of the written symbols. In each case, meaning and rate falter because the reader is focusing on the visual elements which he/she must then reprocess in linguistic format before information can be processed at the cognitive level and meaning obtained.[22] It is for this reason that language development is crucial to a beginning reader as it is to a mature reader who must process professional material written in technical language unfamiliar to the novice student.

In a sense, until a professional/graduate student masters the nomenclature of his/her discipline, reading rate will be slow and laborious. Every time an unfamiliar word appears in a sentence, the novice must stop either to use context clues or a dictionary for semantic meaning. After

gaining semantic meaning, he/she must then reread to get the linguistic sense of the word sequence. If the word meanings are known but the syntactic structure is unfamiliar, the reader must reread and analyze the linguistic patterning of the words. To do this, the reader uses the rules governing standard forms of English to analyze unfamiliar syntax in the technical language.[23] Upon decoding the language according to standard English, the student must then transfer the material to the discipline perspective. Thus, it is imperative that the professional/graduate student know the unusual syntactical structures indicative of his/her discipline as well as the novel nomenclature.

One may conclude, therefore, that a novice professional/graduate student must internalize the unique aspects of the professional technical language to enhance his/her rate of reading and ability to extract meaning from the written form. To do this, the reader must be enarmored with a comprehensive understanding of standard English which can be evoked at will to decode grapho-phonic, syntactic, or semantic forms of the technical material. Until the student, masters the major technical terms and linguistic patterns, he/she will not only have difficulty processing information, but may also process information incorrectly. Diagram II illustrates the relation of the reading task to language and cognitive structure, as illustrated rate and efficiency in reading is effected by language fluency.

DIAGRAM II


READING TASK
Extract meaning from actual or simulated professional material
Rate and Efficiency of reading task
Process at the cognitive level both the surface and deep structures of the written language
REQUISITES
Internal cognitive structure in which to anchor or subsume concepts
Knowledge of grapho-phonic, syntactic, and semantic symbols of the language
Knowledge of Standard English

As may be expected, the technical use of terms in professional material may be unfamiliar and at times perplexing to a teacher of college reading. In many instances, the teacher may no less about the term, its syntactic use or semantic meaning than the student. It is with this point in mind and that of the difficulties facing any fluent reader confronted with unfamiliar language, that the author of this paper advocates the use of a combination learning to learn, language experience and collabrative learning approach to instruction. Theoretically, the student needs experience with the technical nomenclature to expand his/her cognitive structure. He/she also needs to learn how to learn in order to expedite learning the new language and to enhance one's ability to process new concepts. In addition, collabrative learning experiences will permit students the opportunity to master the language and technical skills incidentially through verbal exchange with other students and through collabrative analysis of technical aspects.

For this reason, the teaching of reading to this type of student must be directed toward mastering techniques to decode the new language not just isolated skill instruction or speed reading techniques. Unless the student learns to adapt past learned skills and to develop new skills for the professional material, he/she will be unable to process information accurately and efficiently. Speed reading will not enhance his/her ability to process the information because the visual techniques can only be used when the visual symbols are familiar to the reader. Skill instruction in nontechnical material theoretically would aid the student because the learner should be able to transfer cognitive skills and language processes to various written forms. However, experience with other readers demonstrates that this is usually the exception rather than the rule. Moreover, a focus solely on skill instruction in non-technical material is questionable when one considers the relevance of the professional technical material to the student's mastery

of knowledge and techniques.

In conclusion, given the nature of the reading process required of the learner, and the nature of the learner and the institution as heretofore described, the following program model is advocated to be used as the base of an instructional support program for professional graduate school clientele. Specific program components have been included to provide examples of implementation.

MODEL OF A READING/STUDY SKILLS PROGRAM FOR PROFESSIONAL/GRADUATE SCHOOL CLIENTELE

I. DIAGNOSTIC COMPONENT

A. Utilize admissions data to provide general understanding of the reader and his/her counterparts.

B. Design individualized reading and writing inventory employing professional material to ascertain skill fluency in:

1. Semantic Understanding
2. Context Clues
3. Syntactic Understanding
4. Literal Interpretation
5. Evaluative and Critical Interpretation

II. CURRICULUM AND MATERIALS

A. Develop materials from the discipline that can be used as illustrative, explanatory, or practice exercises for the teaching of learning to learn techniques.

B. Develop programmed materials to be used by the learner to relearn standard forms of English. (At this level one should assume that it is a matter of relearning for the student.)

III. INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES

A. Focus group instruction on collabrative learning experiences. Students should be able to use instructional materials within the group context. Groups should be set up in both formal and informal settings; so that the students learn to communicate with other students without the presence of an instructor. The reading instructor should serve a supportive role to the group giving direction where needed rather than in a leadership role of mandating group direction, purpose, and activities.

B. Limit the amount of individual instruction. Most students at this level do not have the time nor instructional need for intense reading services of this type. Where needed, individual instruction should be provided but should be supplemented with collabrative learning experiences.

C. Provide speed reading techniques to students who have mastered the technical aspects of the professional language. The service should be provided to a second semester freshman or sophomore student.

D. Align tutorial services with collabrative learning groups.

E. Develop language experience techniques for the professional discipline which may be employed by the student groups to expedite the mastery of the professional language.

IV. SERVICES TO PROFESSIONAL/GRADUATE SCHOOL

A. Provide consultant services where needed both in student assessment and instructional assessment. Professional faculty must be made aware of the educational prosesses of the setting which either hamper efficient learning or which are not being utilized to the fullest to enhance learning. For example, the negative effects of a competitive environment.

B. Develop a communications course with a professional faculty member to be offered to students either on a volunteer or mandatory basis. The focus of this course should be innovative techniques of reading the discipline with communication skills rather than just a slower version of what students usually receive in regular instructional courses.

C. Inservice tutors to collabrative learning features and needs of the other students.

D. Where possible organize tutors and other students so that each student can provide strength to the groups and at the same time have his/her weaknesses developed by the strengths of other students in the group.

FOOTNOTES

[1]"Report of the Student-Faculty Committee on the Study of Programs for Minority and Disadvantaged Students." April 28, 1975. Rutgers University, The State University of New Jersey, School of Law - Camden, p.1.

[2]Edgar Z. Friedenberg and Julius A. Roth, Self-Perception in the University-A Study of Successful and Unsuccessful Graduate Students, (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 1954), pp. 2-5.

[3]Richard E. Reilly, "Contributions of Selected Transcript Information to Prediction of Law School Performance", Educational and Psychological Measurement Vol. 32, (Spring-Summer, 1942), p. 423.

[4]Donald A. Rock, "Motivation Moderators and Test Bias", Toledo Law Review, Vol. 43, No. 1, (Spring-Summer, 1970), pp. 530-533.

[5]Clyde W. Summers, "Preferential Admissions: An Unreal Solution to a Real Problem", Toledo Law Review, Vol. 43, No. 1, (Spring-Summer, 1970), pp. 390-393.

[6]Robert R. Ramsey, Jr., "Validity Patterns at Two Law Schools", Educational and Psychological Measurement, Vol. 21, (1961), pp. 490-491.

[7]M.K. Distefano, Jr. and Bernard M. Bass, "Prediction of an Ultimate Criterion of Success as a Lawyer", Journal of Applied Psychology, Vol. 43, No. 1, pp. 40-41.

[8]Charles E. Consaleus, "The LSAT and the Minority Student", Toledo Law Review, Vol. 4, No. 2 & 3, (1970), pp. 518-520.

[9]Summers, op.cit.

[10]Consaleus, op.cit., pp. 520-527.

[11]Friedenberg and Roth, loc. cit.

[12]Roy E. Rickson, "Faculty Control and the Structure of Student Competition-An Analysis of the Law Student Role," Journal of Legal Education, Vol.25, No. 1, (1973), p. 47.

[13]Ibid., op.cit., pp. 47-48.

[14]Ibid., op.cit., p. 51.

[15]Ibid., op.cit., p. 52.

[16]Elgit B. Blanton, "Reception Learning and Advanced Organizers: Implications for Reading Research", Investigations Relating to Mature Reading, Twentieth First Yearbook of the National Reading Conference, Vol. 1, (1972), p. 4.

[17]Ibid., op.cit.

FOOTNOTES (cont.)

[18]Kenneth S. Goodman, "On the Psycholinguistic Method of Teaching Reading", Psycholinguistics and Reading, ed. Frank Smith, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1973), p. 179.

[19]Ibid.

[20]Frank Smith, Understanding Reading-A Psycholinguistic Analysis of Reading and Learning to Read, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1971), p. 193.

[21]Ibid., op. cit., p. 207.

[22]Ibid., op. cit., p. 194.

[23]Blanton, op.cit., pp. 4-5.

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